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NEWS RELEASE

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Nation's Report Card Shows R.I. Students Making Significant Gains in Mathematics Reading Scores Hold Steady at National Average

Test results released today by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education show that 28 percent of Rhode Island's 4th graders are proficient in mathematics – up from a mere 13 percent in 1992, when the test was first administered.

Among 8th graders, 24 percent were proficient in mathematics, up from 15 percent in 1990, when that test was first administered.

In addition, the results show that large gains have been made among Asian, Black, and Hispanic students and that gaps between white and minority students continue to close in Rhode Island. There were also significant increases in the performance of students living in poverty.

“The continuing increase in the mathematics scores over the past decade is great news for Rhode Island,” said Peter McWalters, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education. “We’ve particularly been trying to move the test scores in the core urban districts, and there’s every evidence that those scores are improving.”

Scores on the mathematics tests at both grade levels were 3 percentage points below the national average.

On the reading tests, Rhode Island 4th graders and 8th graders scored at exactly the national average. Among 4th graders, 29 percent achieved proficiency, up one point since 1992. Among 8th graders, 30 percent achieved proficiency, down two points since 1998, when that test was first administered.

There were significant gains by Asian students on the 4th-grade reading test and by English-language learners on the 8th-grade reading test.

“Since 1997, we’ve been focusing on equity gaps in reading – the gaps in performance between suburban and urban districts, between white students and minorities – and we have been closing those gaps,” Commissioner McWalters said. “Now we have to move the baseline and improve the performance of all students.”

The tests – the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) – are administered in all states to randomly selected groups of students. Results, disseminated in documents called “The Nation’s Report Card,” are reported by state-level only. For each test, states are placed into one of three tiers, based on the what percentage of students reached the level of proficiency. Rhode Island ranks in the middle tier on all four of the tests released today.

The U.S. Department of Education will post complete results today at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>, and additional information will be posted at <http://www.ridoe.net/>

Rhode Island Public Schools – Nation's Report Card – 2003 – Mathematics and Reading
Percent of students at or above the level of Proficiency

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2003
Mathematics – Grade 4		13%		17%			22%	28%
Mathematics – Grade 8	15%	16%		20%		22%		24%
Reading – Grade 4		28%	32%		31%		32%	29%
Reading – Grade 8					32%		30%	30%

Note: Table shows results for every year that each test was administered.

Students who have achieved proficiency “have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.